

# CHAPTER 1

## THE SAFARI BEGINS

*Genesis 1:27 – God said, “I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.” (Good News Bible)*

*Are you ready to go on a safari? Let's go to the African grasslands, the home of some of the most awesome animals in God's creation. We're also going to meet two children, Samson and Serena Mbali. Our friends live on the edge of a wildlife reserve with their Mum and Dad, Dan and Alice. Dan Mbali is a park ranger. His job is to help care for the park and its animals, as well as keeping a look out for poachers who might try to hunt animals illegally.*



It was Friday afternoon. Dan answered his phone. It was George, the senior park warden.

“Our gate keeper on the northern gate says that one of the gates needs some attention,” said George. “Do you think you could go and fix it?”

“Sure. I'll go there this weekend,” said Dan.

Dan returned home that afternoon and told his family about the trip he had to make that weekend. The northern gate was at the far end of the game park. It would take 9 hours to get there.

“Couldn't we all go?” asked Samson.

Dan screwed up his face. "Well I don't know. It will be a long and hot journey.

"We don't mind," said Serena, jumping up and down. "Please Dad?"

"Well OK then. Let's all go. But you'll have to help get everything ready!"

After dinner the children quickly got on to packing their things, and while Mum prepared the food. Dad loaded everything into the Land Rover, including several crates of bottled water.

"Off to bed now," Mum called from the kitchen. "We've got an early start tomorrow."

The children could hardly get to sleep thinking about their big adventure.

At 6 o'clock the next morning the alarm went off. They quickly got dressed, ate their bowl of white maize porridge, piled into the Land Rover. It was just a 10 minute drive to the southern gate of the game park. The sun was already up and the children were full of excitement.

The tyres made a rumbling sound as they drove over the metal grid leading up to the gates. Dad put his window down to greet the gatekeeper, then put it up again.

"We must keep our windows up while we travel through the park," he explained. "An open window might be an invitation to a hungry lion! And another thing, we have to stay inside the Land Rover at all times. We can only get out when we reach the secure camping area. Now keep a careful look out for animals. They will be hard to see because of their camouflage. Just be alert, and if you see something move, call out quickly. There are eight pairs of eyes in our vehicle, so we should have a good chance of seeing plenty of animals."

Dad traveled slowly, at about 30 km per hour, in order to give everyone a chance to spot the animals. Any faster and many would not be seen.

"I see something!" Samson called out. "Look, over there!"

Samson pointed to the left.

"I can't see anything," said Serena.

“Keep your eyes fixed on that clump of trees over there,” Dad encouraged her. “The zebras are hard to see because their stripes blend in with the shadows of the trees.”

“Yes, now I see them!”

“Good on you Samson and Serena,” laughed Mum. “You are getting the hang of animal spotting!”

Dan wanted this trip to be a special time for Samson and Serena. He knew that there was much to learn.

“You know, as well as learning how to spot animals, we can learn a lot about the animals. God uses the animals in His creation to teach us many things. Let’s see what we can learn on this trip,” he said thoughtfully.

The children wondered what Dad meant. But they were curious to find out.



# ZEBRA FACTS

- Zebras are similar to horses.
- Zebras live on the plains where they can eat grass during the day and take shade under trees.
- Zebras live together in herds.
- Every zebra has a different striped pattern.
- Although a zebra's stripes stand out when they are eating grass on the plains during the day, when the sun goes down and the shadows are long, the zebra's stripes blend in with the trees. This gives them a better chance against the lions who hunt at this time.
- A zebra has good hearing, eyes on the sides of its head to see all around, and a good sense of smell.
- Zebras can run at speeds of 60 – 70 km per hour.
- Zebras kick fight of lions, leopards and hyenas with their hooves.
- Lions and hyenas hunt zebras, mainly at night.
- A young zebra is called a foal. It drinks milk from its mother.
- Zebras communicate with each other by sounds. When they sense danger they make a 'barking' noise that alerts the other zebras.
- Zebras recognize each other by the sounds they make.
- Male zebras, called stallions, fight each other for a group of females, called mares. They kick with their hooves and bite with their teeth.

